



E-CUBED

EXPLORATION, ENRICHMENT & EDUCATION

Concept: The Rio Grande Educational Collaborative has developed a Before and After School Program (BASP) designed to improve academic outcomes for elementary school students in New Mexico's public schools. We have trademarked our enrichment model E-CUBED™.

Motto

E-CUBED™ = Exploration, Enrichment and Education are the three (3) essential building blocks in our model of extended learning.

RGEC's E-CUBED™ model is based on the federal 21st Century grant program. However, for over 10 years RGEC has taken the base 21st Century model and enhanced it with a variety of innovative and culturally related programs and concepts to transform a strong educational program into a spectacular one. Working within our program environment over the years as well as with our state's educators, RGEC programs have now evolved into a design that enhances the learning taking place in public and charter schools to give students a renewed interest in learning and an extended learning opportunity all of which has supported improved academic outcomes for our students. RGEC programs seek to complement the work of public school teachers, involve parents in their child's instruction and most importantly strive successfully to keep young minds engaged in learning while they are participating in quality afterschool activities.

Our E-CUBED™ programs are designed to extend the learning day through exploration, enrichment and education in an Afterschool learning environment. RGEC accomplishes this by providing creative and disguised learning techniques to be applied which simultaneously gain the interest of the child all the while adding to their educational achievement each and every day they participate in our BASP. This unique type of disguised learning keeps students safe, engaged in the world around them and more connected to their school and community.

The E-CUBED™ model has gained a large audience of students and parents who have voted with their feet and regularly share their approval of our educational approach through survey. Moreover, our E-CUBED™ model seeks to connect a direct interaction between E-CUBED™ instructors and school personnel which creates a vital link between the school and RGEC as an educational partner. Together, schools and E-CUBED™ staff provide:

- Curriculum which can mirror a school's Response to Intervention (RTI) plan and other state-mandated corrective action as needed.
- RGEC Lesson Plans created and aligned with the N.M. State Standards including Common Core, thereby ensuring both educational standards during school and after school are consistent.
- Partnerships are formed between E-CUBED™ staff, principals, and teachers as a result of a perceived and actual common missions.
- Parent-Teacher Organizations, Associations and school councils also are part of the process as we seek to place a representative of RGEC on these school councils or at a minimum present RGEC and its E-CUBED™ model to school organizations as a way of creating an awareness and buy in from the community at large.

Exploration:

Our philosophy is that learning does not stop when the school day ends. Consequently, the first element of E-CUBED™ is directed at stimulating a child's natural curiosity to learn thereby elongating this opportunity through EXPLORATION. In our E-CUBED™ program, our experienced instructors embrace the chance to innovate through exploration and bring learning to students through creative games, projects and presentations.

Community partners play a big role in helping our students explore the world in various ways. Project-based learning enhances the lessons being taught by school teachers and keeps young minds engaged on the subject matter furthering their understanding.

Some examples of E-CUBED™ exploration projects include:

- Afterschool Alliance's national "Lights On for Literacy" events. Each year, E-CUBED™ students read books, write book reports and create artistic luminarias to share with parents, school and community members during this event period.
- Lemonade Day empowers today's youth to become tomorrow's entrepreneurs through helping them start and operate their very own business...a lemonade stand. Lemonade Day is a strategic 14-step process that walks youth from a dream to a business plan, while teaching them the same principles required to start any big company. Inspiring kids to work hard and make a profit, they are also taught to spend some, save some and share some by giving back to their community.
- Local cultural approach to education, we provide a yearly themed program called Dia de los Ninos which is a celebration of the child as a whole. As an example in 2012 the theme is the exploration of children in other countries (culture, language, food).
- Several schools take on recycling campaigns as they learn the importance of improving our environment.
- Annual food drives support local food pantries and food banks. In addition, students hear from the food bank representatives who discuss with them the issue of hunger and food insecurities in their communities.

Exploration in the E-CUBED™ model also involves strategic games such as chess, checkers and Scrabble. Science projects are also conducted and supplement the school-wide Science Fairs annually in our representative schools. Moreover, offering students the chance to learn about art, music and languages is also a strong part of the E-CUBED™ exploration component as we provide performing arts, plays and world cultural exploration into areas around the globe as a part of the curriculum and lesson plans in each BASP.

Enrichment:

The E-CUBED™ program has created an ENRICHED learning environment which provides a safe, caring place where children have the opportunity to extend their learning. Our E-CUBED™ model builds a classroom(s) where learning surrounds the child. Moreover, an environment is created where learning opportunities abound and where a natural stimulation of a child's interest in learning is peaked. RGEC's commitment to this approach is bolstered by a partnership with the States Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD). A child's sense of security and safety play an enormous role in their ability to focus and learn. In our effort to raise the bar with safety and enriched learning environments, RGEC enlists direction and oversight from ECECD to ensure each certified ECECD after school site achieves and maintains an added level of enrichment. We have melded this element into our already strong academic based model providing a further evolution in services and delivery within the program.

Through this partnership much emphasis is placed on the structure and look of an individual BASP site. Structured learning areas are required to be established to provide children with choices and options of ways to learn with each area dedicated to a specific child's needs or subject. Areas such as a dedicated Reading space, Sensory Motor space, Nature/Science learning area, Art/Music area, and Dramatic Play area are all examples of this approach. Within each area reading and math underlie the activities that are enjoyed by children. For example, in Nature/Science a specific lesson on "bug collection" might involve measuring size and performing calculations during analysis.

Another aspect and valued offering with our E-CUBED™ Model at RGEC is our dedication to developing the whole child. RGEC believes social and emotional development is equally important in a child's learning continuum. As such, our programs teach life skills to nourish young minds in an effort to promote positive youth development. Some examples are:

- Etiquette and manners are taught through a specific learning activity developed by one of our teachers and has since been identified as a best practice lesson utilized by all sites. In the "Manners Class" students are given a chance to learn greeting techniques, listening skills, as well as a setting of a table, proper use of utensils, and to practice acceptable behavior at the dinner table whether at home or in a restaurant.
- Other lessons and activities have been developed that address through small group discussion within the activity including such topics as friendship, respectful communication, and bullying.

Education:

The third and last component of our E-CUBED™ model addresses EDUCATION. Without a doubt the importance of educational programs and principles permeating in our lessons and activities cannot be stressed more. RGEC is about education and extending the learning day for children in an approach we refer to as disguised learning. This is not a new concept in the world of educators but what allows an organization such as RGEC to pull it off in a unique manner is the fact that we are a private company and not a public institution. Our organization is not constrained by the same Federal and State edicts on teaching protocol as the public school system and consequently our instructors are free to be as creative with learning approaches as their creative minds allow them. Ironically, many school teachers who instruct in our BASP have openly stated how much they appreciate the autonomy they are afforded during our program time which is often in direct contrast to their subscribed approaches during the school day.

However, creative learning techniques are not the complete story. Our E-CUBED™ model also has the benefit of using hundreds of lessons and activities which have been developed by our instructors in well over a decade of operation. We have systematically captured the best of the best activities into digital library accessible from our RGEC website by all instructors working in their respective RGEC afterschool programs. This proprietary work product covers a variety of subject areas and has all been vetted and reviewed to ensure a high educational instructional guide is followed. RGEC operates each BASP site with the highest of academic standards in after school sites here in New Mexico and we ensure the quality of our lessons and activities by aligning them to New Mexico State Academic Standards including Common Core. Additionally, we employ a highly qualified and mature program staff that must consistently receive professional development to ensure their skill levels remain strong.

Our subject areas are varied and often address areas no longer offered or now minimally offered within a regular school day. Students in the E-CUBED™ program participate in:

- arts and music
- games and sports
- drama and dance classes
- nature and science exploration
- computer exploration
- literacy activities
- foreign language sessions
- math centers
- nutrition and fitness activities
- clubs ... and more!

The afterschool period is about fun and learning but we do not forget about a child's school day responsibilities. Prior to moving into the afterschool programmatic part of each day our instructors spend time providing support with a child's daily homework assignments. Homework Help is a consistent and integral part of our education model and while we seek to support children with their homework it is not our goal to complete this process as we believe a parent's involvement is still crucial.

It has been an evolution in development for RGECC in its afterschool efforts. From a 21st Century model over ten years ago we have transformed a great beginning into a broader based educational approach. Through work product development, collaborative efforts and through experience with disguised and creative learning techniques, we have transformed our academic based model into a true 21st Century model we call E-CUBED™: Exploration, Enrichment, and Education are the three building blocks of our after school model. Many lessons and experiences are embedded in our E-CUBED™ model. We have learned it is especially important to provide programs that are safe, fun and enrich the lives of young children. We strive to achieve these goals by operating our educational programs to the highest academic standards which are aligned with New Mexico State Academic Standards. Additionally, we utilize a highly qualified program staff that must consistently receive professional development to insure their skill levels remain strong. Finally, in our Before and After School Programs we license all of these childcare sites through New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department to ensure a unique level of safety standards exist and best practices are followed. We package strong academic curriculum with safe nurturing learning environments directed by highly qualified personnel. However, to capture the interest and imagination of children we also provide creative and exciting ways for children to learn while enjoying this supplemental part of their school day.

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